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Unremembered Politics: A Discursive Analysis of Lyrical Ballads and American Revolutionary Politics

Graham Buckner Stowe
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Graham Buckner Stowe entitled "Unremembered Politics: A Discursive Analysis of Lyrical Ballads and American Revolutionary Politics." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Nancy M. Goslee, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Allen Dunn, Allison Ensor

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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UNREMEMBERED POLITICS: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF LYRICAL BALLADS AND AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

A Thesis
Presented for the
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Graham Buckner Stowe
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Abstract

This thesis seeks to define Wordsworth's political stance in his 1798 Lyrical Ballads. Up to this point, his work's politics have been defined negatively, that is, he has been described by what he is not. Instead, I suggest that reading his poems through the lens of an American Revolutionary discourse offers us definitive view of his political position. To these ends, my first chapter establishes this discourse, outlining the three elements of the discourse on which I focus. Most important of these is the elevation of common humanity present in Wordsworth and the discourse outlined. Also present are an anti-urban sentiment and walking, which both point toward a democratic impulse. The following two chapters focus on Lyrical Ballads itself, first poems that are not typically read as political, and finally I offer a reading of "Tintern Abbey," a poem around which so much controversy has centered. In these two chapters, I use the discourse outlined in the chapter one to show the ways in which the poems point back towards American revolutionary politics. These formulations rely, in part, on Foucault's discourse theories, which allows us to draw connections between texts that may seem unrelated initially. Such analysis, as I stated above, allows us to positively define Wordsworth's politics through the texts of the American Revolution.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Methodology and Establishment of a Discourse of the American Revolution

Much criticism on Wordsworth has sought to open up and expose the political structure of his poetry. Most would agree that the political stance of his work shifts through the 1790s, from outright support of the French Revolution, to a disillusionment with the course of that revolution without completely giving up on the principles of the revolution's early years. My ultimate goal here is to construct a clear and concise definition of his political stance in the late 1790s, looking most specifically at the 1798 edition of Lyrical Ballads. To do so, though, I will begin by looking past him for the time being. Instead, this chapter will focus mostly on Revolutionary America and the reactions to it from English and American politicians, thinkers, and writers. Consequently, a revolutionary discourse will emerge, which will, in turn, give us a lens through which we can read Wordsworth's politics. I believe this is necessary not because critics have ignored his politics, but because defining them in relation to the American Revolution will reveal a sharper picture of them. One critic who defines the political structure similarly is John Williams. Williams seeks to define Wordsworth's politics in relation to earlier eighteenth century pastoral poetry and "a tradition of British political dissidence that pre-dates the impact of French revolutionary political philosophy and action on the British political scene" (vi).

Perhaps most important for us is his comment that Wordsworth's early works of the 1790s "indicate that he associated support for the American colonists in the 1770s and the political aims of the French Revolution in its early years with that belief" (Williams 29). This assumption is important for two reasons. One, Wordsworth clearly associates the goals of the French Revolution's early years (at which point he supported it) with the goals of the American Revolution. Secondly, Williams's argument encompasses and reveals by implication the widely held view that French Revolution politics, especially after 1792, are inadequate for defining Wordsworth's politics in the latter part of the decade because of his ever-growing disillusionment with the path the revolution took. Williams's argument, that Wordsworth's politics spring from late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Whig ideology, will be refined here slightly, as I will show that Wordsworth's poetry in 1798 can be read through the lens of an specific American revolutionary discourse. To get to this point I will rely heavily on Foucault's theories of discursive unities and formations. I will begin by outlining the manner in which I will use Foucault's ideas.

Foucault's theories allow us to disregard what we normally see as a typical grouping of a given discourse, such as calling it a literary or political discourse. By doing so, we can uncover an underlying (and/or overarching) discourse. In this case, by reading Wordsworth's poetry alongside political,

literary, and anthropological documents of the American Revolution, we can uncover and pin down his political stance in the late 1790s. This reveals what Foucault calls the unities of discourse, in which we can see

> [r]elations between statements (even if the author is unaware of them; even if the statements do not have the same author; even if the authors were unaware of each other's existence); relations between groups of statements thus established (even if those groups do not concern the same, or even adjacent, fields; even if they do not possess the same formal level; even if they are not the locus of assignable exchanges); relations between statements and groups of statements and events of a quite different kind (technical, economic, social, political) (Foucault 29).

After exposing the relations between these statements and texts, we are able "[t]o reveal in all its purity the space in which discursive events are deployed," all the while keeping in mind that we are not "undertak[ing] to re-establish it in an isolation that nothing could overcome; it is not to close it upon itself; it is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of the relations within it and outside it" (Foucault 29). Our goal, in other words, is to break up the unities of discourse, in this case to break barriers between a literary discourse and a political discourse, to expose the discursive unities and formations between them. Most important for us in the above

quotation is the "interplay" between discourses, because it is this interplay that allows us to uncover Wordsworth's politics. This unearthing comes about from the interplay revealed because

> such a description of the facts of discourse is that by freeing them of all the groupings that purport to be natural, immediate, universal, unities, one is able to describe other unities, but this time by means of a group of controlled decisions. (Foucault 29)

Breaking through these "natural" and "immediate" groupings will, as I said above, expose a new way of reading and defining Wordsworth's politics. This will not be a brief task, though. I will first establish what I see as the dominant discourse of the American Revolution, looking both at specific revolutionaries in America and reactions to the Revolution in England. After establishing and defining the characteristics of the discourse, I will then move to a discussion of Wordsworth's work, looking specifically at poems in Lyrical Ballads that are not normally considered overtly political. I am not ignoring the poems we normally read as politically charged; the discourse revealed will clearly illustrate that the politics of the less political poetry shares characteristics with the former. Looking at these poems in particular serves two purposes. Primarily, it will reveal the political discursive formation created between Wordsworth's 1798 Lyrical Ballads and the discourses of the American Revolution. Additionally, though, the politics of these "apolitical" poems

will be exposed. With these things in mind, I will finally offer a reading of "Tintern Abbey," around which so much discussion has centered in recent years.

First, I will outline several assumptions concerning the American Revolution. A quotation from Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America provides a way to get at these assumptions:

> The principle of sovereignty of the people governs the whole political system of the Anglo-Americans. […] In the nations by which the sovereignty of the people is recognized, every individual possesses an equal share of the power, and participates alike in the government of the state. (49)

Though written roughly thirty years after the time we are concerned with here, Tocqueville's passage offers two important things: One, a simple and concise definition of the American people and the system of government, and two, an idea of Europeans' reactions to the American democracy.

According to Tocqueville, it is the people who play the most important part in the governing of America. In other words, common humanity has a great deal of power not seen elsewhere. He also states, similarly, in reference to the founders of the nation, "[…] great equality existed among the emigrants who settled on the shore of New England. The germ of aristocracy was never planted in that part of the Union" (31). And even where it was planted, in the south, the aristocracy was never quite what

it was in Europe, because the upper classes "had no tenants depending on them, and consequently no patronage" (32). With this phrase, we see that the aristocracy was unable to flourish in America as it had in Europe, which is an idea that will resonate with and play into the politics in Lyrical Ballads, even considering Tocqueville's decidedly conservative political views. Despite his conservatism, what is important in his statement here is that his reaction to the revolution as a European becomes clear. In short, people saw the revolution as granting rights and privileges to common people theretofore unseen in Western culture.

I should note that this idea is perhaps the most important element of the revolutionary discourse for our purposes; all other elements will point back toward this sovereignty, and such an idea was extremely radical for its time. Gordon Wood, in The Radicalism of the American Revolution, argues that it is this sovereignty of the people that makes the revolution so radical, as he writes that it resulted in "transformations in the relationships that bound people each other," breaking down the hierarchy that characterizes earlier western culture (5). Many, however, have argued that the American Revolution was not a terribly freeing revolution, and that it did not cause a significant cultural change. For instance, Howard Zinn argues that the Constitution was set up as a document to protect economic and slave systems, and that the framers were simply

watching out only for their own best interests (90, 101). It is difficult to argue fully against his claims, but we must look at the perceptions and initial results of the Revolution, not just the intentions of the framers. Therefore, we will assume Wood's thesis: that the importance of the revolution lies in its changing the relationships between people, breaking down existing hierarchies. In his final chapter he describes this as a newly developed "Middle-Class Order," in which he notes that by as early as "the second decade of the nineteenth century Americans were already referring to themselves as a society dominated by the 'middling' sort," so much so that in many parts of the new republic there is nothing but a "middle class" (Wood 347). By implication, then, we see this attitude must have begun earlier, and it is conceivable that the "middling" society was at the very least beginning to take hold in the late 1790s and early 1800s. Wood goes on to note that many of the revolutionaries and founders of the nation did become disillusioned by the attitudes of the subsequent American generation, that Thomas Jefferson, for instance, felt let down by the common citizens "in whom [he] had placed so much confidence," as the people's focus turned toward money-making and evangelical Christianity (Wood 367). Jefferson had believed that the Revolution he helped start with his Declaration of Independence would turn people toward Enlightenment thought, but instead, by the time of his death "[t]he people were more religious, more sectarian, and less

rational than they had been at the time of the Revolution" (Wood 368). His disillusionment, though, is for the most part unimportant at this juncture. As I have stated, what is important is Jefferson's and other revolutionaries' consistent elevation of common humanity, especially earlier in their lives. Their contributions to the revolutionary discourse are, in fact, important to my claim here. These revolutionaries make every effort to elevate the standing and status of a common humanity, which is what Wood argues does happen--it just happens that they do not approve of the results of their efforts.

In addition to this elevation of common humanity, two other elements of the discourse are important to discuss here in the forming of my argument about Wordsworth's work. As I said above, these relate to and point back toward the elevation of common people, but they are distinct enough to need explication. First, walking and physical mobility are central to the discourse. In reading this as such, I rely in part on Celeste Langan's claims, and my discussion will approach this particular element from the opposite direction than many of the arguments I present, starting with a critic reading Wordsworth and moving back to the revolutionary discourse. Langan argues that Wordsworth's poetic structure itself mirrors walking while it mirrors the development of liberal thought. This is unmistakably part of the revolutionary discourse we are looking at here, as Langan argues that Wordsworth is in fact part of a larger development of

liberal ideas. Her stance is decidedly Marxist, as she writes that his "tautological structures," which are the mirroring of walking, is "manufactured by a logic of infinite circulation--capitalism and money-form" (14). Therefore, she concludes "mobility […] guarantees to the vagrant residual economic freedom, despite his or her entire impoverishment" (17). Her focus is, as we see here, a Marxist reading of vagrancy in Wordsworth, but her analysis of walking as allowing for social mobility is my point here. For Langan, walking is "economic freedom;" for us, walking is, in the popular American terminology, democratic freedom, but the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, economic freedom is a piece of the democratic freedom I address here. To develop this idea further, Jeffery Robinson's perspective on walking is helpful here. He claims that walking in literature "follows the pressure in eighteenth- and nineteenth literature toward the democratization of literature" (6). Additionally, Robinson writes, "walking signifies the restlessness and the mobility of liberal thinkers" (52). It is these theories of walking from which we will operate here. As Nicholas Roe states succinctly, walking represents "democratic mobility" during the 1790s (171).

Lastly, to expand on the role an opposition to urban life has in the development of democratic principles, I turn briefly to a work of Wordsworth's. In one sonnet, "Written in London, September, 1802," he states explicitly an anti-city sentiment.

He writes that London, and all cities for that matter, have caused the end of "Plain living and high thinking," and for this reason he is "opprest" (lines 11 and 2). Wordsworth, since he consistently places himself among "the people," that is, common humanity, claims that such people are oppressed by the conditions of urban life. Therefore, he argues that "We must run glittering like a brook/In the open sunshine, or we are unblest" (lines 5-6). This attitude also comes up even in a much later work, the 1850 version of The Prelude, in which he describes smoke as "betray[ing]" a "lurking town" (127 line 24). The smoke is not simply exposing the presence of a town--it is betraying the town as it lurks over the hill. Wordsworth is not alone in his disdain for cities and elevation of agrarian society; it is, in fact a larger part of the revolutionary discourse we will outline here. This third element is not as prevalent as the first two I have discussed, but it certainly does play a role, as it manifests itself positively in a close attention paid to nature by various authors. It will be most important in my final chapter in which I focus specifically on "Tintern Abbey" and Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia.

Edmund Burke will play a central role in establishing the revolutionary discourse I have been discussing here, largely because of his well-known support of the American cause. In his 1777 "Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol," he argues that the individual rights of Americans should be protected. His politics

make him a tricky figure to deal with here; his conservatism must make us wary of his intentions, as in this letter his argument hinges on what is good economically for the British Empire. Regardless of this, he does argue for the individual rights, and each individual is given sovereignty, to use Tocqueville's language. He was interested in protecting this sovereignty because he "believed that constitutional liberty in England would stand or fall upon the outcome of the struggle with America; that if the British government succeeded in destroying liberty abroad, English citizens would soon have none at home" (Stanlis 21). In other words, when the government attacks the sovereignty of any of the people in the empire, then the sovereignty of each individual throughout the kingdom is at risk.

In the "Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol" he calls for the British to back off on their methods of ruling the Americans. He writes, "It affords no matter for very pleasing reflection, to observe, that our subjects diminish, as our laws encrease [sic]" (Burke Writings 290). First, we see his desire to keep the Empire intact, but more importantly, we see the very thing with which the Americans have a problem--what Burke deems "laws" the revolutionaries call tyranny. His biggest complaint lies in the suspension of *habeas corpus* for certain crimes, which he calls a "malignity," because it is "contradictory to all the principles, not only of the constitutional policy of Great Britain, but even of that species of hostile justice, which no asperity of war

wholly extinguishes in the minds of a civilized people" (290). In other words, *habeas corpus* is a fundamental right of all people, even when under the threat of war. He continues, stating

> I never would take from any fellow-creature whatever, any sort of advantage, which he may derive to his safety from the pity of mankind, or to his reputation from their general feelings by degrading his offence, when I cannot soften his punishment. (Burke Writings 291)

He is referring to the punishment for piracy (death), which is one of the crimes for which *habeas corpus* was suspended. In short, he claims that all people deserve a fair trial. By using the term "fellow-creature," we see the very elevation of common people discussed earlier. He is not simply saying people of his own status deserve a fair trial, he is saying all "creatures" do. By using such a word he implies that all, both above and below him on the social ladder, deserve this right.

He continues in the same vein discussing the second crime for which the writ has been suspended, treason. He writes that because of the way a law has been applied, forcing those accused of treason in America to stand trial in England, "almost all that is substantial and beneficial in a trial by jury is taken away from the subject […]. This however, is saying too little; for to try a man under that act is, in effect, to condemn him unheard" (Burke Writings 292). As I said above, he is quite obviously elevating the common humanity, essentially stating that someone

tried several thousand miles from his or her home can not receive a fair trial with a jury of his or her peers because this jury would be predisposed toward conviction because of the forced travel. He says this himself, noting,

> Before this act, every man putting his foot down on English ground, every stranger owing only a local and temporary allegiance, even a negro slave, who had been sold in the colonies and under an act of parliament, became as free as every other man who breathed the same air with him. Now a line is drawn, which may be advanced farther and farther at pleasure, on the same argument of mere expedience, on which it was first described. There is no equality among us; we are not fellow-citizens, if the mariner who lands on the quay does not rest on as firm legal ground, as the merchant who sits in his comptinghouse. (Burke Writings 297)

While Burke may not support a social revolution and upheaval that would create a new place in the societal system for lower classes, he is most certainly standing up here for equality under the law, which is part of the Americans' hopes and, in turn, the revolutionary discourse we are establishing here.

The language he uses to express the elevation of common humanity is important here as well. In the first line of the above passage, he claims that "every man putting his foot on English soil" deserves equality under the law. With this language, Burke implies the physical movement of walking. As I

discussed earlier, walking and physical mobility are central to the revolutionary discourse. The metaphor is used repeatedly throughout the works within the revolutionary discourse and will consistently point toward the revolutionaries' cause, in Burke's words, equality, freedom, and liberty.

Another important figure in establishing the discourse of the American Revolution is Phillis Wheatley. She is useful here for several reasons. First, she was read widely in both America and Britain, showing a sort of physical extension of the Revolutionary discourse across the Atlantic. Secondly, it is convenient that she is a poet. This detail exposes something we already know, that poetry can and does have explicit and implicit political meaning and value, but because she discusses the revolution directly it is simpler to see the connection between politics and literature. She addresses this issue in several poems. For instance, she writes in "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North America, &c." that "*Freedom*" has left New England, but the Earl of Dartmouth will help to bring it back. She writes

> No more, *America*, in mournful strain
> Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd complain
> No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,
> Which wanton *Tyranny* with lawless hand

> Had made, and with it meant t' enslave the land. (Wheatley 83)

The poem is addressed to the Earl, whom, as Julian Mason points out, Wheatley hoped would help to turn the tide of events in the early 1770s (He received the position mentioned in the title of the poem in 1772). These hopes were unfounded though, as he proved rather unsympathetic to the American cause (Wheatley 150, ed.'s footnote). Whether or not Dartmouth cared for Wheatley's politics is not particularly important here, though. What is important is the manner in which she expresses these politics.

In the first verse paragraph, Wheatley personifies "Freedom" into a being whose main attribute is an ability to move and be moved about physically. She writes:

> Hail, happy day, when, smiling like the morn,
> Fair Freedom *rose* New-England to adorn:
> The northern clime beneath her genial ray,
> Dartmouth, congratulates thy blissful *sway*:
> Elate with hope her race no longer mourns,
> Each soul expands, each grateful bosom burns,
> While in thy hand with pleasure we behold
> The *silken reins*, and Freedom's charms unfold. (Wheatley 82, italics mine)[1]

Physical mobility, as I have discussed, is an essential element of the Revolutionary discourse. Therefore, when Wheatley uses

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[1] Wheatley has a tendency to italicize terms she is personifying. I have ignored this here to emphasize the terms I italicized myself.

the verb "rose," which implies movement, as "Freedom" rises enough to "adorn" all of New England, she creates a part of the discourse essential to Revolutionary thought. The fact that Dartmouth is driving Freedom with "silken reins" indicates a similar element of the discourse--freedom is most certainly an entity that Wheatley defines through its movement. This particular part of her metaphor is somewhat complicated, since freedom is being controlled by Dartmouth, but the politicians involved in the Revolution were not anarchists--they all expected someone to be in control. Lastly, even the word Wheatley chooses to represent Dartmouth's influence, "sway," implies movement. With this particular term, Wheatley turns something as simple as Dartmouth's position of power, in which he holds influence as the Secretary of State for North America, into a posturing that creates freedom, with the implied movement in the term. Such heavy emphasis on movement and mobility will appear repeatedly in the revolutionary discourse, and will, each time point towards the democratic impulse of the discourse.

John Shields's reading of Wheatley's use of the pastoral form is also useful here in establishing the Revolutionary discourse. The pastoral, according to Shields, is subversive in her poetry because it disregards the standard of white culture, but without coming right out and attacking it, since she focuses on pastoral conventions rather than religious conventions (632). This is especially interesting today since Wheatley is so often

marginalized as having sold out to religion. In her use of the pastoral, she subverts the status quo in her white, British/American upbringing in her passive refusal to focus solely on Christianity in many of her poems. As Shields points out, in 1783 "Wheatley wrote an emotional elegy on the death of Samuel Cooper, the pastor who had baptized her" yet she mentions his religious affiliations in only one line, instead describing him as "a man of public affairs who dealt enthusiastically with the American Revolution […]" (642). She does this, in part, through the use of the pastoral.[2] She compares her dead friend to a "sweet Rose, its blooming beauty gone" and she states that her "Muse […] mourns," despite the changing seasons. Consequently, by relying on pastoral conventions, which indicate a subversive condemnation of white culture, combined with her focus on Cooper's political stance rather than his position in the church, we see clearly that Wheatley's support for the Revolution and her position in the revolutionary discourse.

Shields also points out that Wheatley relies heavily on the pastoral conventions of Classical and pagan imagery in certain poems, such as "On Imagination," which serves the same purpose, tearing down the Christian status quo. In "On Imagination," as Shields notes, the following lines are "an almost wholly pagan, classical world" (Shields 641). Wheatley writes:

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[2] Shields is not terribly clear on how he is defining the term "pastoral," but it seems that he defines it as work that relies on classical and natural imagery.

Fair *Flora* may resume her fragrant reign,
And with her flow'ry riches deck the plain;
Sylvanus may diffuse his honours round,
And all the forest may with leaves be crown'd;
Show'rs may descend, and dews their gems disclose,
And nectar sparkle on the blooming rose. (lines 27-32)

In response to these lines, Shields asks, "If Wheatley is a staunch, conservative Christian, filled with a never-questioning piety […] then why are biblical figures absent from her ideal paradise?" (641). By her leaving these out, we see again at least a partial rejection of the conservative, Methodist culture into which she has been brought. Her praise of imagination here is not a heavenly, celestial, paradisical vision; it is a forest. In other words, it is pastoral, or at least anti-urban. Along the same lines, by rejecting elements of the American culture she has become a part of, she also rejects the British Empire, and, in turn, supports the American Revolution. Shields argues convincingly that she believes such a political stance will help bring her freedom, but at the same time she plays into the larger discourse by expressing these ideas through a pastoral poem (645). By using such a writing style as a way to break free of slavery and attack the British, she illustrates an extremely important part of the Revolutionary discourse I am outlining in this chapter. It is not only that Wheatley supports the

Revolution; as I said earlier it is the manner in which she does, through the use of the pastoral.

As I said above, Wheatley fights against the conservative Christian world and the British with a focus on nature through these pastoral images. Nature, as anyone with only a cursory knowledge of Romanticism knows, is often the basic subject matter and is central to the imagery of Wordsworth's poetry. My contention, though, as I will show in more detail in the following two chapters, is that this focus on nature is absolutely essential for his politics. It is in his near-pantheism and praise of nature that we see the positive manifestation of the anti-urban sentiment that is central to the democratic impulse of Wordsworth's poetry. This is similar in Wheatley's work. While nature is used slightly differently and with a distinctly different style, Wheatley's choice of nature and the pastoral is a highly democratizing decision, because it allows her, albeit subversively, to express her own voice. The neoclassical model she employs works similarly for her; for someone attacking the English, She takes on a surprisingly "English" style.

As I said above, the freedom she discusses is slightly different than the freedom others involved in the discourse are discussing, but nonetheless it can be tied up within the overall Revolutionary discourse. Looking back to her poem addressed to

the Earl of Dartmouth, in the third verse paragraph she asked the addressee:

> Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song
> Wonder from whence my love of *Freedom* sprung,
> Whence flow these wishes for the common good,
> By feeling hearts alone best understood,
> I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
> Was snatch'd from *Afric's* fancy'd happy seat:
> What pangs excruciating must molest,
> What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?
> Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd
> That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd:
> Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
> Others may never feel tyrannic sway?[3]

Henry Louis Gates notes that in these lines Wheatley is "complain[ing] bitterly about the human costs of the slave trade" and though certainly true, there is more than a simple condemnation of slavery in these lines. "Freedom" here is not simply being free of slavery; Wheatley "wishes for the common good." Such a claim elucidates two points. One, it shows that she ascribes to the widely held view that slavery was a stain on the entire culture, limiting the freedom of all, even non-slaves

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[3] As I addressed the term "sway" earlier, I should note that in this case, while Wheatley uses it to mean "influence" again, the adjective "tyrannic" puts and ironic twist on it. A "tyrannic sway" is essentially an oxymoron, whatever is under tyrannic influence cannot move at all.

and those who held no slaves, in a slave-holding state. Two, and more importantly here, the verse paragraph illustrates plainly that she is interested in the "common good." In doing so, she indicates that she is interested in the good of everyone, that everyone should be allowed to be free, both slaves and non-slaves, that even the most "common," (the lowest classes) should have the opportunity to gain ground in the world. In other words, her focus on the "common good" shows an exceptional awareness of those that do not have a rank or title, and just as it does in Burke, it points toward a larger shift in the focus occurring within the Revolutionary discourse. If the American Revolution achieved only one goal, as Wood argues, it did allow common humanity a new place in society.

As stated earlier, this elevation of common humanity is the most important element establishing the discourse of the American Revolution, especially when looked at in conjunction with the other two elements outlined in this chapter. These three elements will reveal themselves repeatedly throughout Lyrical Ballads, and consequently, the discursive unities between these seemingly unrelated texts will emerge. This will allow us to ascertain a clear picture of the politics in Lyrical Ballads.

Chapter Two

The Other Political Lyrical Ballads: Defining their Political Structure with the American Revolutionary Discourse

As I state in chapter one, the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how some specific works of Wordsworths fit into what I have now established as the revolutionary discourse. In my initial conception of this chapter, I was to offer what amounted to close analyses of the selected poems, pointing specifically to the presence of the three elements of the revolutionary discourse outlined in chapter one, which would then demonstrate the positioning of Lyrical Ballads within said discourse. And while this is still a large part of the argument I present in the following pages, alone it failed to fully demonstrate the ways in which the poems can be seen part of the revolutionary discourse. My readings, without something to ground them soundly in the historical discourse I have been discussing, created a kind of disembodied history, one in which the poems were so distanced from the discursive formation I argued they belonged within that it was no longer visible. I think this has something to do with our own conditioning; as I have noted, the poems I look at here do not have the overt political statements many of Wordsworth's others do, and consequently we often look at only the philosophical inquiries and notions within them. Consequently, we have a hard time seeing how they could have an active political structure at all.

To combat this problem, this sizable gap in my argument, I turn to anecdote. With anecdote, as Gallagher and Greenblatt write, we can "open history, or place it askew, so that literary texts [can] find new points of insertion" (51). The goal of the anecdote is to "puncture" history, jab holes into the accepted dominant and standard historical readings, and tear down the walls between these accepted histories, and reveal new thinking about the history and the positioning of literature within that history (Gallagher and Greenblatt 51). In other words,

> the anecdote [can] be conceived as a tool with which to rub literary texts against the grain of received notions about their determinants, revealing fingerprints of the accidental, suppressed, defeated, uncanny, abjected, or exotic--in short, the nonsurviving--even if only fleetingly (Gallagher and Greenblatt 52).

Gallagher and Greenblatt are discussing using counterhistorical anecdotes to reveal a new positing of literature within history. I am not doing so, at least not exactly; as we will see, my anecdote clearly comes from a dominant historical narrative. Despite this, the method works because with it I counter positions on Lyrical Ballads's politics, not that my conclusion is particularly new (that the poems subvert orthodox literary and political thought), but that we can redefine the subversion taking place with the discourse created by the American

Revolution.[4] That said, I will begin with the following rather familiar, but nonetheless illuminating, anecdote of Benjamin Franklin's trip to France to gather support during the American Revolution.

Most important for us here is the manner in which Franklin chose to present himself visually. First, and perhaps most famously, he refused to wear a wig, though this went against the grain of fashion in the French court (Wood 86). Additionally, he presented himself with a "sober brown coat, crab-tree walking stick, and homely bifocal spectacles" making himself "a picture of republican simplicity" (Ketcham 143). His presentation was almost entirely successful, both politically (since the French did eventually back the Americans against Britain), and socially. Brands points out that even "[p]oems were written to honor the American sage, the great philosopher of liberty" (528). In fact, one "Franklin-watcher" at the time noted, "'It is the mode of today for everybody to have an engraving of M. Franklin over the mantlepiece'" (Brands 528). The French took such a liking to Franklin that "[e]ven the way he kept his hair," without the wig, "became a fashion." He became, quite simply, "more […] a symbol than a man," since he was "[s]imple, reserved, virtuous, he stood

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[4] I should point out that my use of such a method is well within the limits of the Foucauldian system I have outlined. As Gallagher and Greenblatt point out, Foucault himself uses anecdotes constantly, "present[ing] the anecdotes in the historical archives as residues of the struggle between unruly persons and the power that would subjugate or expel them" (68). In other words, Foucault uses anecdote in order to present one of the overarching themes of his life's work.

for the new American, the citizen of nature sporting a beaver cap and the man of science wearing bifocals across the bridge of this nose" (Masur 11).

He developed this "public image, that of a simple Quaker in a fur cap" because it "served his purposes," for he knew that if he portrayed himself as a wealthy, well-dressed gentleman, as he did in America, he would come off in Paris as trying too hard to be European (Dull 83). On the other hand, if he arrived in Paris dressed-down, looking like the American farmer or merchant stereotype, he could more easily endear himself to the French court. And so he did. It may seem that because his dress and decisions were something of a front, that it is somehow less genuine as we discuss his place in the revolutionary discourse. On the contrary, though, his conscious decision to appear as "simple" illustrates my point: Franklin elevates common humanity through these actions, because he is aware of the power such a presentation will have. He garners the support of everyone in France with this one simple move, from the liberals to the court and everyone in between (Brands 528-529). While this is the most obvious and most important element of his actions for us, the other two elements of the revolutionary discourse are also present here. First, his appearance is certainly anti-urban, since he avoids any clothing that would be considered fashionable to the Paris elite, even down to the above-mentioned wood walking

stick. This obviously points to the final piece of the discourse, walking as representative of democratic mobility.

Franklin's decisions and actions in France during the mid 1770s and early 1780s and their clear arrangement in the discourse established in chapter one will, as I said above, serve to ground the claims I make about some of the poems in Lyrical Ballads in a "real" historical circumstance. In other words, because we now see an active political force (more active than Wheatley or possibly even Burke as far as actual political consequences) operating within the revolutionary discourse, the presence of the three elements in Lyrical Ballads will clearly point directly to their position in the discursive formation. I will now move to the collection, beginning with a look at the Advertisement, with which we will see that defining the politics of Lyrical Ballads is most productive when done through the lens of the discourse created by the American Revolution.

In the Advertisement, Wordsworth writes that the poems "were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure" (21).[5] He continues, stating that readers

> should ask themselves if [the book] contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human

[5] All quotations from Lyrical Ballads come from: Wordsworth, William and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Lyrical Ballads and Related Writings. Ed. William Richey and Daniel Robinson. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

> incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision. (Wordsworth 21)

In other words, the goal of the book is to overturn our expectations about poetry--instead of rigid, archaic language and meter, the language of common people will be used. Clearly, then, (and not surprisingly, considering this is a standard reading of Wordsworth) we see the revolutionary implications of the collection. As I have stated, though, it is not simply the discourse of a literary revolution in which Lyrical Ballads becomes involved. It is, while not causing revolutionary or political insurrection, most assuredly a piece of the revolutionary discourse established by the American Revolution, and consequently the politics of these poems and the collection are best read through and as a piece of this discourse. I will begin by looking at "The Thorn."

There are two elements of "The Thorn" that are particularly important in demonstrating how Lyrical Ballads fits into the revolutionary discourse. First, the character of Martha Ray itself exposes and unearths the discourse through the actions she takes. Secondly, Wordsworth's formal and stylistic decisions do also. I will begin with Martha Ray's character, relying in part on Toby Benis's claims that she "exemplifies a new figure in Wordsworth's corpus--the quasi-vagrants of Lyrical Ballads" (95).

Martha Ray is, according to Benis, a "community member and wanderer, neighbor and alien" (95). Such a positioning puts her in a particularly useful space for us, as she is an outsider *within* an oppressive community, since she lives in a community that refuses to accept her because of acts they believe she may have committed. I contend that she makes efforts to escape this community, and while this alone is important as it connects her with oppressed Americans, it is not the most important aspect of her character. Instead, the manner in which she tries to escape, walking on the "mountain path," positions her squarely within the revolutionary discourse (line 27). To illustrate this, we again turn to Benis, who claims,

> Martha Ray's wandering is essential to her ambiguous relation to the community; that ambiguity, in turn, induces neighborly suspicions about alleged crimes. Ultimately, she narrowly escapes being hanged on the strength of local gossip. Likewise, Wordsworth's itinerant habits, his newness to the area, and his associations with radical activists led Somerset villagers to suspect the poet and his sister of French sympathies and insurrectionary objectives (97).

The latter part of this passage refers to Wordsworth and Dorothy's move to Alfoxden, where gossip from the community surrounded their "proclivity for a good ramble" (Benis 105). We will return to this aspect of Benis's argument later.

First, though, what Benis calls Martha Ray's "ambiguity" in the community is exactly what locates her within the revolutionary discourse. The community sees her as ambiguous simply because she is different; a woman who was left at the altar, evidently pregnant, she can not and does not fit into the community's status quo. Therefore, Martha Ray tries to escape the community by walking on the path, away from the community, into nature. Here then two elements of the revolutionary discourse actually fall into place around Martha Ray--walking and the anti-urban sentiment. As I have implied, it is unimportant that the community which she is a part of is not necessarily urban; instead, it is important that she chooses natural surroundings as her escape. With this, we see what I have called the positive manifestation of the anti-urban sentiment. Her neighbors are part of a tyrannical system, seen through their desire to hang her based essentially on hearsay, as the narrator implies repeatedly that he is not positive the facts of his story are correct. For instance, he responds to the question of why Martha Ray acts the way she does by stating, "For the true reason no one knows" (line 90). Nonetheless he goes on to share the rumors, prefacing them with comments like "I'll tell you every thing I know" and "I'll give you the best help I can" (lines 105 and 111). Some in the community

had sworn an oath that she
Should be to public justice brought

And for the little infant's bones

With spades they would have sought (lines 232-235).

But they do not dig anything up. No one in the community offers to help her; she lives alone in a shack, left by the man she loves, and the community's focus is on "public justice" for an act that they can not be sure she committed.

To escape this attitude from the community, Martha Ray chooses to walk, which essentially frees her from the oppressive community. This is most clear in stanzas fourteen and fifteen, as

Old Farmer Simpson did maintain,

That in her womb the infant wrought

About its mother's heart, and brought

Her senses back again:

And when at last her time drew near,

Her looks were calm, her senses clear. (lines 149-154)

Simpson is no different than the narrator of the poem, since he merely "maintain[s]" that Martha Ray regained her senses, without any real factual basis for such a claim. In stanza fifteen, Martha Ray's ambiguity to the community and her escape through nature and walking becomes even more evident:

[…] if a child was born or no,

There's no one that could ever tell;

And if 'twas born alive or dead,

There's no one knows, as I have said,

> But some remember well,
>
> That Martha Ray about this time
>
> Would up the mountain often climb.

Here the narrator makes it clear again that Simpson has no factual evidence for his claims, since "no one […] could ever tell" whether a child had been born or not. The community, since Martha Ray is ambiguous to them, assumes the worst, and therefore wants to hang her. This leads directly to Martha Ray's efforts towards freeing herself by walking up the mountain, which, as I have said, locates her within the revolutionary discourse because she retreats to nature through walking.

Clearly, then, we see that the community refuses to engage in her life at all, and most importantly, it is when she is on her walks that they avoid her the most. More positively construed, she has successfully freed herself from the community with her walking through nature. Additionally, because passages like the above demonstrate Martha Ray's individual sovereignty, James McGavran's claim that Martha Ray is a highly individualistic becomes useful:

> Wordsworth presents Martha Ray in all her defenselessness and debility but simultaneously infuses and bedecks her with life and strength, making her appear more vital, more capable of both nurturance and violence, of love and death, than the weak men who jabber around and about her (121).

McGavran argues that Wordsworth is "critiqu[ing] his own patriarchal compulsion to exert textual control over women," but his argument works well with mine (118). McGavran implies that with her actions (walking, most importantly, but also her crying, the possibility of a murder committed, and her insanity) Martha Ray expresses her subjectivity and individuality, or, in our terms, her own sovereignty. McGavran's argument also illustrates another important piece of the revolutionary discourse and its presence in "The Thorn," as Wordsworth's critique of the poet's patriarchal tendencies elevates women, an often disenfranchised portion of society. In other words, another element of the revolutionary discourse is exposed with this argument: the elevation of common humanity. This aspect of the revolutionary discourse in the poem will be revealed again, through my discussion of the poem's formal elements.

Paul Sheats focuses for the most part on two of the most famous (or infamous) lines in the poem, which were attacked by Wordsworth's friends and critics alike. In these two lines, closing the poem's third stanza, the narrator gives us the measurements of the poem's pond: "I've measured it from side to side/'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide" (lines 32-33). Despite two centuries' worth of attacks on these lines, Sheats argues that "[t]his bathetic couplet satirizes the taste it offends; its humor resides in its power to confront the reader surreptitiously with what he most dislikes" (94). In other

words, the lines operate in the poem to attack those who find them displeasing. The couplet causes "a kind of stylistic 'violence'" which seeks ends that are clearly political and social as well as aesthetic" (99). The political goal of the poem, according to Sheats, is "to purify the readers' response to Martha Ray's story. In terms set by the Preface [to Lyrical Ballads], it seeks to carry forward the work of renewing the mind of contemporary England" (97).

The form, then, backs long-standing historicist ideas about Wordsworth's poetry. His use of bathos is an overtly political act because readers are shocked, given "deprivation and literary 'pain,' rhetorical effects that recapitulate the historical experience of the radicals of 1793, who were compelled to understand (if not experience) violence as necessary to the birth of a new order" (Sheats 99). Sheats's goal here is to reconcile a formalist reading with the historicist trend, which works up until this point in his argument, but here I must depart from his claims. The bathetic moment in the poem absolutely does send a certain amount of violence towards the reader, but it does not and cannot mirror the events of 1793. To simplify, the poem does not cut any heads off; it does though, engage in some literary rabble-rousing by positioning itself within the revolutionary discourse that we have already seen pervading this poem and furthermore, Lyrical Ballads as a whole. The bathos of the poem is an elevation of common humanity--with these two lines the

narrator becomes a regular guy, the epitome of a sea captain, interested in exact measurements and the positioning of a puddle. To make this clearer, we can look back at Franklin. To turn Franklin's political actions to literary terms, he has, quite simply, presented himself bathetically. He dresses-down, presents himself as the stereotype of a simple man from America in order to, in Sheats's terms, enact a kind of violence on the cultural system in which he was living. His goal is to uproot the hierarchy that takes away the sovereignty of individual Americans. As we have already discussed, he endeared himself to the French in this way, giving the Americans the opportunity to win the war.

This is exactly the turn "The Thorn" takes, but inverted. As Sheats argues, the bathos of the two lines is meant to offend, rather than endear, but the end result is exactly the same--common humanity is elevated. To clarify, turning to Sheats's words:

> [P]oems like "The Thorn" offered human nature a second chance to prove itself, as it had not in 1793, by the quality and nobility of its response. That such hopes 'ought' not be disappointed was, perhaps, the burden of Wordsworth's apology for the art of ''Tis three feet long': 'it ought,' he said, 'to be liked'" (100).

This second chance discussed in "The Thorn" illustrates that Wordsworth's "commitment to the humanitarian ends of the French

Revolution had not diminished in 1798" (100). These humanitarian ends sought through the politics of Lyrical Ballads coincide with the politics of the early parts of the French Revolution are the same as those sought, or at least achieved, by the American Revolution. These ends were the consistent elevation of common humanity, which, as I have discussed, is an integral part of the revolutionary discourse in question here. The politics of the bathos in "The Thorn," then, point us directly back to the discourse established in chapter one.

Returning briefly to Benis's biographical reading of the poem, we see that it too fits squarely within the revolutionary discourse established in chapter one. Like Martha Ray, Wordsworth and Dorothy also free themselves with their walking, physically breaking away from an oppressive community and its gossip about the mere possibility that they may be involved in radical politics (Benis 105). They were, obviously, cleared, after an English spy "concluded [they] were not a French menace but isolated, disgruntled English people," but the fact of the matter is that they were investigated only on the strength of their neighbors' gossip (Benis 105-106). And while a Foucauldian reading would typically disregard the author's life, this particular reading is especially illuminating, since we know Wordsworth was at least somewhat involved in radical politics at certain points of his life, but not to a treasonous extent

(especially by 1797-98).[6] Thus, in "The Thorn," Wordsworth expresses frustrations concerning the political structure of England in 1797 and 1798. These frustrations show Wordsworth himself positioned within the revolutionary discourse, with a desire for results equivalent to those of the American Revolution, one in which common humanity is elevated without the unpleasantness of murdering the upper classes. Consequently the poem fits into the revolutionary discourse, with all three of the elements outlined in chapter one present--an elevation of common humanity, walking, and the positive manifestation of an anti-urban sentiment through an attention paid to nature.

Another important aspect of Lyrical Ballads that points toward the revolutionary discourse is the attention paid to education in several poems of the collection. Each of the poems I will discuss here expresses a disdain for formal educational methods. Instead, they promote a pantheistic version of the world which, in turn, positions them in the revolutionary discourse because of its focus on the natural world. The poems' educational proclamations demonstrate the consistent and constant presence of a revolutionary discourse throughout Lyrical Ballads. I will begin by offering a fairly general discussion of the educational politics with a reading of one poem, and move to more

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[6] Wordsworth's radicalism is not particularly well documented, as records of his life in the mid 1790s are few and what we do have is contradictory. We do know, though, through his "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" and other unpublished documents that did have a "fervid concern with man" and "a radical humanitarianism which he presents as a legasy of his experiences in France" in The Prelude. (Jones 185-186).

specific ideas in others. As we will see, all three elements of the revolutionary discourse are present in the discussion of education presented by the poems, just as these elements are present in the anecdote on Franklin. Consequently, we can read the politics of the entire collection through the lens of the American Revolution, based on the discourse established in chapter one.

First, in "Lines Written at a Small Distance from My House," Wordsworth addresses Dorothy, asking her to join him:

> My Sister! (tis a wish of mine)
> Now that our morning meal is done,
> Make haste, your morning task resign;
> Come forth and feel the sun. (lines 9-12)

He continues on, telling her to wear her "woodland dress/And bring no book, for this is one day/We'll give to idleness" (lines 14-16). With these two portions of the poem, urban life is again attacked. This is most clearly seen in his request that she wear a "woodland dress," one in which Dorothy will not be bound by the constrictions of typical dress of the time. Wordsworth asks her to stop, though, and walk into nature with him, leaving behind all the latent pressures within a home that press her into these chores. Obviously, then, we have both a strong anti-urban sentiment expressed here through the positive manifestation thereof, in addition to the ever-present walk and its underlying promotion of democratic principles. As in "The Thorn," it is

unimportant that this is not a highly urban setting--the same pressures apply to her as would in an urban home. To escape these pressures, the two leave the setting altogether, to spend the day in "idleness," with no books. Their goal to go out into nature, in other words, since it is set up in opposition to a world of books that promotes an organized and oppressive cultural system, is to learn from this day of "idleness," because, as we will see, through the empirical philosophy promoted throughout Lyrical Ballads, one learns more from idleness than the formal education through books. I will discuss in more detail later how an elevation of common humanity is unearthed with this style of education. For the time being, we will use this poem and its positioning on education as a framework to lead to a more specific reading of education in Lyrical Ballads.

The best way to more specifically approach the collection's stance on education in 1798 and its subsequent position in the revolutionary discourse is to start later in Wordsworth's career, from his position on the matter during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Even a perfunctory glance at Lyrical Ballads suggests a strong opposition to all formal education, but according to R.A. Foakes, Wordsworth eventually came to subscribe to the theories of Andrew Bell, who "claimed to have invented" what was later dubbed "the monitor system," in which the older pupils monitor the younger (189). Wordsworth, though, did not take on these theories until well after 1798, in 1808, after

hearing Coleridge lecture on Bell, and even as late as 1805 he was rather ambiguous. As Foakes writes,

> In thinking about education Wordsworth seems at this time [1805] to have associated it with, on the one hand, liberty, natural flowering, a Rousseau-like sense of natural growth, and on the other hand, prison, as a kind of bondage, without finding an easy commerce between the two. (Foakes 201)

Clearly, then, looking back from this direction we see the progression Wordsworth makes, again in Foakes's words: "His attitude to education […] seems to have contradictions, or at least, muddle, built into it, in relation to the concept of liberty," which can be seen in the "rapturous casting away books in the dialogue with a schoolmaster in Lyrical Ballads […]" which "gives way to" the above-mentioned ambiguous position (199-200). Foakes quotes "The Tables Turned" where "Books" are "a dull and endless strife" (199). Instead of reading, the narrator proposes his friend should "Come forth into the light of things/ Let Nature be your teacher" (lines 15-16). Clearly, then, though it will appear later, there is little ambiguity in "The Tables Turned," where Wordsworth continues on,

> [Nature] has a world of ready wealth,
> Our minds and hearts to bless-
> Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
> Truth breathed by chearfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can (lines 17-24).

The personification of nature here makes very clear his position in 1798--it is through nature, not formal education, that we learn. In fact, earlier in the poem, "books" are described as "toil and trouble" and actually cause *physical* harm, as they will make the addressee "grow double," squelching his liberty (lines 2, 3, and 4). By using such language, the speaker indicates that even Matthew's physical mobility is limited, which, quite obviously, is a negative illustration of one of the elements of the revolutionary discourse--his walking is stopped by the books' ability to constrain him physically. Additionally, though, the poem demonstrates another piece of the revolutionary discourse: the elevation of common humanity.

By condemning a standard educational style, the reading of mass quantities of books, the poem attacks one of the dividing lines between classes: literacy. And while this line shifts during the 1790s, as I will discuss later, it is certainly still part of what separates classes. Consequently, when Wordsworth attacks readers, he attacks upper classes, and in turn, elevates common humanity. This is most clear in the final stanza, where the speaker states:

Enough of science and of art;
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives. (lines 29-32)

The stanza operates dialectically, with the mind and the heart opposed to one another. In the first two lines, the addressee's mind is the actively working, but it is doing so by looking at "barren leaves" of books--implying that although the mind is working, it is unable to grow through this method of education. Instead, in the last two lines he/she is told to go out into nature and bring "a heart," not a mind, which can learn through empirical methods. It is important to note that the speaker does not say that his/her friend should bring "his" heart, but instead "a heart." We can assume, then, that he/she must somehow procure and assume a new attitude, undergo a fundamental shift in consciousness, one in which the mind becomes secondary to the heart, through which he/she can learn by means of observation. This is, quite obviously, an elevation of common humanity, because the education promoted here comes from the outdoors, where lower class artisans and farmers tend to work, and learn, their occupations. We cannot presuppose that all those who work outside are learning the things this poem insinuates they should, but we can assume that they have an opportunity that upper classes do not as the do spend a great deal of time outside. This empirical view of education and the disdain of books occurs

elsewhere in Lyrical Ballads, most importantly in the companion piece to "The Tables Turned," "Expostulation and Reply."

In this poem, a character named William is asked by his friend Matthew,

'Where are your books? that light bequeath'd
'To beings else forlorn and blind!
'Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd
'From dead men to their kind. (lines 5-9)

The rhetoric employed here, while heavy-handed and irritating, is especially effective for exactly that reason. Human beings are called "forlorn and blind," and told that our only hope is through books, a comment that operates to anger readers. Additionally, Matthew's bibliophilism only makes us dislike him more as he offers no strong justification for the condemnation of his friend. A closer look, though, will show us that we are actually getting some foreshadowing of William's response because, by stating that the "spirit" from these books is "breath'd/From dead men," we learn, even before the poem's response, that there is nothing to learn from books: for dead men cannot breathe. Furthermore, by stating that the spirit is being transmitted "From dead men to their kind" suggests that their ideas are only useful to other *dead* people, not those who actually read.

William's response to Matthew is in exactly the same vein as the speaker's statements in "The Tables Turned;" he promotes

an empirical philosophy and its applications in an educational system. He states, "'there are powers,/'Which of themselves our minds impress,/'That we can feed this mind of ours,/'In a wise passiveness'" (lines 21-24). The comment operates in exactly the same way as the comments on nature in the other poem: formal education is not necessary in any way, shape, or form. Instead, we must "feed" our minds "passive[ly]," allowing data to flow naturally in and through them. So again this is a demotion of formal education because of its tendency to imprison its participants and, subsequently, a promotion of an empirical philosophy that inherently elevates common humanity as this is the method of education in which such people would most likely be involved. Accordingly, the poem's position within the revolutionary discourse is revealed, as a clear example of the elevation of common humanity.

An implicit discussion of educational style and methodology is also present in "Anecdote for Fathers: Shewing How the Art of Lying May Be Taught," this time critiquing one of the dominant pedagogical methods being developed in the 1790s. The poem comments on catechistic educational methodologies, which were developed in response to the broadening of literacy to the lower classes, and eventually "came to be viewed as a prime means of containing the new literacy" (Richardson 854). In other words, lower classes were contained, regardless of their new opportunities for education, by being forced to learn the

automatic responses of a mixed secular/religious catechism (Richardson 856). Students were given answers that they were then expected automatically to deliver when teachers posed questions; if they did not respond correctly, they were punished. So, despite the lower classes' new ability to read, through the popular catechistic pedagogy lower classes were actually inhibited in their thinking.

It is quite clear that "Anecdote for Fathers" attacks the catechistic method because of this tendency to squelch the voices of the lower classes. In the poem, Edward represents the student, and the lower classes contained by the catechistic education, while the questioning father is clearly the oppressive force of the upper classes with his questions about whether Edward likes Kilve or Liswyn better. Richardson points out that "[w]hen the child guesses and dutifully produces the desired answer (Kilve), the father, still questioning his own regret for Kilve, presses the child 'five times' [...] for a reason" (857-858). Edward, though, is unable to announce the answer immediately, causing the father to become irritated, despite his own inability to think of one. This "trap[s] the child in a painfully ambiguous rhetorical position" because the repeated questioning "implies a cognitive response," even though the force of the questioning "seems to demand instead the performative response catechism: rehearsing the answer which the adult expects" (Richardson 858). This is impossible for Edward,

though; despite the fact that he "can initially read his father's clues well enough to answer, 'Kilve,' at this point there is no answer for him to intuit, as the father has none in mind" (858). While this is, as I have said, an obvious condemnation of the educational system, it also fits directly into the revolutionary discourse, both for the same reasons already outlined with "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" and another more conspicuous reason.

First, the two characters are described as having "stroll'd" on a morning "walk," without much purpose in their step (line 5). Unmistakably, then, we have the physical mobility of the revolutionary discourse present. This particular element is negated somewhat by the father's stunted thinking later in the poem, but we can certainly see that he is making an effort toward striving for freeing gestures. More importantly, though, is the manner in which Edward is described: "My boy was by my side, so slim/And graceful in his rustic dress!" (lines 17-18). Edward's clothing, being "rustic," situates him in the discourse as a common person outside the city. And then, through the representation of the father as rather unintelligent, but nonetheless a teacher, the poem elevates common humanity (Edward) and again while simultaneously advancing the anti-urban sentiment of the revolutionary discourse.[7]

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[7] Another fruitful reading of the poem for us deals the poem's mentioning of Liswyn, which implicitly refers to John Thelwall, Jacobin and friend of Wordsworth (Editor's note to text). By mentioning this

Perhaps the best way to sum up Wordsworth's stance on education is to rely on another work of Foucault's, this time Discipline and Punish. In short, Wordsworth is attacking the idea of the "disciplinary gaze" that was being set up in the schools of the time period (Foucault 174). A goal of these schools is, through a pyramidal structure of observation (not unlike the above-mentioned system of Bell's), to discipline students while teaching them (Foucault 175-176). Another, much larger, goal is to "normalize" the students, fitting them into the structure of a society, "impos[ing] homogeneity." Most importantly, though, about this imposition of normalization, is that while it goes about normalizing, "it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another" (Foucault 184). For example, grades, and the differences between high grades and low grades in various classes between students are used to specialize those students, working them into useful slots in the power structure of a given society. Lyrical Ballads, then, clearly attacks such a system by promoting what we see here as a non-traditional view of education, rather than the highly structured pyramidal school Foucault describes.

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place, the poem gathers up a political structure that is not altogether definable outside the broad term "radical." Adding to the confusion, Roe calls the poem "a humorous deflation of the overworked Godwinian intellect" (Radical Years 197). While Godwin influenced Thelwall to an extent, the two did differ on many points politically. Consequently, we see in the poem a rejection of Godwinian thought in favor of "passivity and reverie," though not simply apolitical, considering the mention of Thelwall.

These poems attack the very core of such a system, promoting an education of the heart, as seen in "The Tables Turned." This is, of course, a rather vague position--it is difficult to define an educational philosophy around these positions. We do not need to, though. Instead, what is important here is the attack Lyrical Ballads makes on the upper classes and the ensuing elevation of the lower classes through the elements of the revolutionary discourse. This, in addition to the literary "revolution" Lyrical Ballads helped to start, indicates its position within the political structure of 1798, and its place in the revolutionary discourse.

While I have not, obviously, commented or offered a reading on all of the poems in Lyrical Ballads, I hope that the poems discussed here sufficiently demonstrate the position of the collection in the revolutionary discourse. The analysis I offer here, in conjunction with the more specific outlining of the elements of the discourse in chapter one, demonstrates the constant presence of the revolutionary discourse, with all three of the major elements represented--the elevation of common humanity, the democratic impulse implied through walking, and an anti-urban sentiment. In my final chapter, I will focus solely on "Tintern Abbey," around which so much discussion has centered of late, offering yet another versions of a Foucauldian analysis by reading it directly alongside Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia.

Chapter 3

Historicizing the Revisiting: The Politics of "Tintern Abbey" through Notes on the State of Virginia

Over the past two decades, a great deal of debate has focused on the political structure of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." This discussion has centered on several new historicist readings, most notably Majorie Levinson's and Jerome McGann's works. Here I will add to this discussion, relying on the ideas outlined in my previous chapters, demonstrating how the poem fits into what I have already established as the discourse of the American Revolution. In order to do so, I will unearth the discursive formations between Wordsworth's contemporary Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia and the former's poem. Jefferson's text is, while written slightly earlier, particularly useful in revealing the poem's politics because, even in his writings that are not overtly political, democratic tendencies are apparent. Furthermore, as I intend to show, "Tintern Abbey" is filled with a political structure that reveals a democratic impulse positioning it within the revolutionary discourse. My methodology changes slightly here with the reading of this particular poem, as I am not simply relying directly on my earlier formulation of the revolutionary discourse to define "Tintern Abbey's" politics. Instead, by reading the poem directly alongside Notes, the interchange and interplay between the elements of the revolutionary discourse becomes vastly more apparent. I take this approach for several reasons. First, the

poem itself is more complicated than others of Wordsworth's in Lyrical Ballads. Secondly, and more importantly, the amount of dialogue by modern critics around and about the poem necessitates that I be as specific as possible in defining the poem's political stance, even as I argue that it too, like the other poems already discussed, fits directly into the revolutionary discourse.

This analysis will begin with an explication of several sections of Jefferson's Notes and the democratic impulse therein. It is important to realize that the text is a piece of a larger anthropological discourse, as the majority of it is a study of the inhabitants of Virginia and the effects of the surroundings on them. When combined with an analysis of Wordsworth's poem, then, we will see an interplay between anthropological and literary discourses, which will subsequently position them both in the revolutionary discursive formation as political discourse. The elements we are investigating are the same as those we have seen thus far: the elevation of common humanity, walking, and an anti-urban sentiment. It is important to keep in mind that I address these three points as separate entities only to simplify and illustrate the discursive formation created between "Tintern Abbey" and Notes. We should not forget that they are inextricably intertwined to create the politically charged democratic impulse of the revolutionary discourse. In other words, the unraveling I do here is, in actuality, an artificial,

impossible act. In fact, the three elements are themselves involved in an interchange not unlike the interplay between "Tintern Abbey" and Notes, and it is through this exchange that "Tintern Abbey's" democratic impulse is constructed. I will now move forward to the specific texts in question.

First I will offer a reading of Jefferson's work, which will show the same three points outlined as constituent parts of the revolutionary discourse. Each of these elements--the elevation of the common humanity, walking as representative of democratic mobility, and the anti-urban attitude--are present in Notes. The presence of these three concepts in Jefferson's work points more explicitly to the elevation of democratic ideals more than their presence in Wordsworth's work does, since Jefferson was a politician. For instance, his involvement in the American Revolution is only the beginning: Jefferson spent a lifetime involved in politics promoting the democratic ideals and goals of the American Revolution. His location for us, as a politician writing texts that fit squarely into the revolutionary discourse, is seen most clearly in his severe disappointment by the last years of his life. He had hoped that the American Revolution would create an enlightened society. Instead, though, the "[o]rdinary people, in whom [he] had placed so much confidence" had turned away from enlightenment ideals, and instead toward what he believed were "forces of ignorance, superstition, and darkness," which included, but were not limited to, people's

focus on making money and the tendency of the people to turn to evangelical Christianity (Wood 367). But, according to Wood, these are things that Jefferson helped to create, despite his inability to see this. In other words, he placed all his faith in common humanity, but when they did gain power and choose their own ways of life, this disappointed him. This does not make the Revolution a failure, though. In fact, it illustrates exactly the assumption we have been working under throughout--the American Revolution did in fact allow a place in society theretofore unseen for common humanity. Jefferson's dissatisfaction, then, should not be read as an indication of the failure of the Revolution; in fact, it is a perfect example of how the American Revolution did succeed, since common humanity was given the opportunity to think for themselves for the first time, even though one of their leaders did not like the way they chose to.

What we can extract from this, though, in short, is Jefferson's place in the Revolutionary discourse: Notes, as anthropological text, is an important piece of Jefferson's political stance because it stands as a monument to the Enlightenment thought he was striving to promote. He created a document about the land wholly to educate others about it, giving detailed descriptions of the geography, the Native American populations, ways in which people made their livings, and a variety of other things. In writing such a text, his goal is

clearly to educate his readership about these things that are important to an Enlightenment education. Consequently, because of this, the political ends of the texts are clear, and it is not at all surprising that the three elements of the revolutionary discourse should be present, which allowing us to read "Tintern Abbey" through a lens created by Notes. In Jefferson's text, though, the delineations between the three elements are not terribly clear-cut due to the above-mentioned interplay between them; however, as I have stated, they are certainly present, despite their intertwined nature.

I will begin with Jefferson's description of Virginia's Natural Bridge, where he writes:

> [T]he sides of this bridge are provided in some parts with a parapet of fixed rocks, yet few men have resolution to walk to them and look over into the abyss. You involuntarily fall on your hands and feet, creep to the parapet and peep over it. Looking down from this height about a minute, gave me a violent head ach. (25)

Here we see the Burkean sublime, since the bridge obviously "excites the ideas of pain and danger" in Jefferson. It is also an object that "operates in a manner analogous to terror" (Burke Philosophical 134). But the physical, "violent" pain brought on by the sublimity of the bridge is only a piece of the sublime nature of the bridge. Since Jefferson "involuntarily" kneels, we cannot help but be reminded of Burke's discussion of a deity in

the sublime, where Burke writes that when looking at a sublime scene "we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him" (Burke Philosophical 136). Jefferson himself writes, in a note to the 1787 edition of Notes, "It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime, to be felt beyond what they are here [...]" (264). Therefore, by elevating nature to the level of a deity, Jefferson shows an attitude opposed to urban life. This is not his most explicit statement on nature, though, so I will return to it later with a discussion of Jefferson's stance toward farming.

Walking is also an essential element of this description of the natural bridge. In addition to the reference above, he writes that the bridge "affords a *public* and commodious passage over a valley" (25, italics mine). In other words, anyone can walk across the bridge, although it is private property. In fact, it is his property, as he acquired the land on which the bridge stands in July 1774 (Jefferson 264, editor's note). Since he is willing to give the public access to the bridge, allowing them to walk across it, we see again the important role of walking in promoting democratic ideals and mobility. In other words, the combination of allowing anyone access to the bridge with that of walking, shows both the social mobility available through democracy and Jefferson's elevation of such a political system.

Additionally, Jefferson elevates common humanity in this description of the bridge. He writes that the stream under the bridge "is the water of James river and sufficient in the driest seasons to turn a grist-mill, though its fountain is not more than two miles above" (25). With this description of a hypothetical mill, Jefferson promotes the working-class people of the fledgling American democracy, simply because he uses the terminology of the common man. The important aspect of this statement is not that the upper classes had different terminology for mills, but that Jefferson chooses to describe the flow of the river in terms of how if could affect common people. With such an elevation, Jefferson promotes the mobility democracy provides, which is not unlike the significance of walking in our scheme here.

Through his description of the bridge then, Jefferson tells us a great deal about his politics. Obviously, he places a heavy emphasis on promoting common humanity. Since he does so within a description of a natural setting, it is clear that nature and natural surroundings also play an important role in Jefferson's system. In other words, in allowing the public to *use* the bridge, and people to *use* the stream, nature and humanity combine. We cannot say that this is a completely harmonious relationship, but with such claims Jefferson does promote an agrarian, democratic society, which later in his life would come to be known as Jeffersonian Democracy.

He takes an even stronger stance promoting an agrarian society in a later section of Notes. In this section, entitled "Subjects of Commerce," Jefferson encourages Virginians to stop growing tobacco, in part because other states are growing more and underselling Virginia, but also because tobacco creates "a culture productive of infinite wretchedness." This is because farmers who grow "it are in a continued state of exertion beyond the powers of nature to support," and very "Little food of any kind is raised by them" (Jefferson 166). Accordingly, those living on tobacco farms are "badly fed," and they deplete land of necessary nutrients quickly, making land difficult to farm (168). Instead, he proposes that Virginians focus on the cultivation of wheat, despite problems they have had with weevils. He believes, even with these problems (for which he does offer several solutions), that wheat is preferable over tobacco for the people of Virginia because

> Besides cloathing the earth with herbage, and preserving its fertility, it feeds the labourers plentifully, requires from them only a moderate toil, except in the season of harvest, raises great numbers of animals for food and service, and diffuses plenty and happiness among the whole. (Jefferson 168)

With these lines, Jefferson promotes the subsistence wheat provides above the cash tobacco does. He is by no means claiming that farmers should not desire to make money, nor that they will

not make money with wheat. Instead, he promotes a culture in which people create their own livelihoods from the land rather than relying upon moneymaking measures. Obviously, we see here a promotion of an agrarian society, and in turn, a downplaying of urban culture in which the means of existence are based on economic gain.

He expresses such sentiments much more explicitly, as I stated earlier, in a section of the work on "[t]he present state of manufactures" in Virginia. Here he opposes the trend toward "manufactures," because he believes there is no reason to "transfer to America" the manufacturing culture of Europe because America has "an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman" (164). Therefore, Jefferson asks

> Is it best then that all our citizens should be employed in its improvement, or that one half should be called off from that to exercise manufactures and handicraft arts for the other? Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. (164-65)

He writes that some manufactures are necessary for farming, but that for the most part America should "let our work-shops remain in Europe" (165). He goes on to say that "[i]t is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them

to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles" (165). This attack on the "principles" of Europeans may lead Americans to some inconveniences, but this will be offset by Americans' "happiness and permanence of government" (Jefferson 165). Jefferson is not exceedingly clear on what exactly the manners and principles of Europeans are, but we do know that he must find the industries and the cities of Europe a factor that distances people from themselves--that is, manufactures take away from humanity its virtuous nature because, if farmers are the chosen people of God, who are the only people on earth with "genuine virtue" who keep alive the "sacred fire" of humanity, it is safe to say that European merchants and manufacturers do not have these things. Cities, in fact, according to Jefferson, are the breeding grounds for this deprivation of humanity's virtue. He does not assault individual Europeans, but instead urban life prevalent in Europe:

> The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution. (165)

With this scathing attack on urban life, Jefferson completes his promotion of agrarian society to the point that it is nearly a utopian desire. It is especially important that he believes an

agrarian culture will "preserve a republic" more effectively than an urban one--that the "spirit" of a farming community holds democratic ideals more effectively than an urban community.

As we see with this brief analysis of portions of Notes, these three specific aspects point to Jefferson's democratic impulse. This is not at all surprising, considering Jefferson's stance as a republican politician. Through the presence of these three points though, we can tie Notes directly to "Tintern Abbey," revealing a political discursive formation between the two, and such revelation allows us to define the politics of the poem very specifically. I will now move to a reading of "Tintern Abbey," in which I will isolate the three aspects of the revolutionary discourse I have discussed throughout this essay. I will address each point and each instance it appears in the poem in its entirety, rather than moving through the poem line by line. Though I am approaching it in this manner, as I have already said, we must remember that it is an artificial act--these elements of the democratic impulse in "Tintern Abbey" are inseparably tied together. I begin with his anti-urban sentiment.

Following Levinson's lead, David Chandler argues that Wordsworth's focus on the vagrants in the first verse paragraph are a memory of himself in his previous visit to the Wye in 1793. In turn, the "hermit" of line twenty-two refers to the Wordsworth of 1798 on his "Revisiting" (Chandler 3). As I implied earlier,

vagrancy, and the elevation of the homeless, is a kind of elevation of common humanity, but it is not specifically opposed to urban life. Vagrants, of course, are as much a part of an urban landscape as they are a part of a natural one, if not more. For this reason, I will focus specifically on Wordsworth's choice of the term "hermit." As Chandler points out, Levinson argues that "hermits choose their poverty, vagrants suffer it" (Levinson 43). The word hermit etymologically implies this choice Levinson describes. The term, while currently implying abject poverty and something akin to vagrancy, originally connotes, according to the OED, "One who from religious motives has retired into solitary life" (OED). While the word has turned toward more secular use, the idea of a monastic intent still lies under and within its layers of meaning. For that reason, we can read the presence of a hermit in the natural setting of the poem as a distinctly anti-urban move in the poem. Hermits, like vagrants, may in fact live in a city, but this hermit is not in one. Instead he "sits alone" in a "cave" in the Wye valley (lines 22-23). In choosing to live in a cave, in a natural setting, the hermit here represents an elevation of a natural subsistence over that of an urban life. To go so far as to speculate on the lifestyle of such a hermit is to assume that he or she, in all likelihood, grows, hunts, and gathers his or her food. In fact, it is not totally out of the question that Wordsworth's hermit is actually cooking on "his fire" where he "sits alone" (lines 22-23).

This reading of the hermit represents the first piece of the discursive formation between "Tintern Abbey" and Notes. The hermit's decision to live alone ties directly to Notes's urging of Virginians to grow wheat rather than tobacco. The hermit chooses his happiness through an independent livelihood, with limited or no economic exchange, just as Jefferson wishes Virginia's farmers to do through wheat cultivation. Perhaps Notes does not take it as far as "Tintern Abbey"--it does not eliminate society from people's lives; it does promote an agrarian society. The sentiment is the same though. With the hermit, "Tintern Abbey" shuns urban life, just as Notes does with an explicit elevation of an agrarian culture.

I do not want to imply that "Tintern Abbey" does not elevate agrarianism. On the contrary, it promotes farming communities just as Notes does. Wordsworth does this with the same sort of deification of nature as Jefferson does in his description of the natural bridge. Wordsworth writes that he is "behold[ing] these steep and lofty cliffs," which recalls the Burke's sublime as discussed above (line 5). He continues, writing:

> The day is come when I again repose
> Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
> These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard tufts,
> Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,
> Among the woods and copses lose themselves[.] (lines 10-14)

By using the word "repose" in line ten, Wordsworth implies that the natural setting around him, including the sublimity of the cliffs, is creating tranquility in him. Nature's ability to make one tranquil clearly illustrates a deification of nature. It is the same view Jefferson takes with his explicit emphasis on the sublime. Wordsworth's reaction is not violent and does not cause a headache, but the simple fact that nature has power over him illustrates a deification of nature. In turn, to elevate the agrarian society, Wordsworth raises farming to a level equal to that of the deified natural surroundings. For example, in line fourteen, he writes that the farmer's "orchard-tufts" become lost in the natural surroundings of "woods and copses." Roe compares this to Gilpin's description of the Wye, noting that in both texts we see human-created "deformities" become part of the natural surroundings (160). But for Wordsworth, these farms are not deformities at all--they are on an equal level with the already deified nature all around them. Consequently another piece of the discursive formation between "Tintern Abbey" and Notes falls into place. Jefferson's claim that farmers are the "chosen people of God" mirrors Wordsworth's deification of farmland, and vice-versa. That is, the texts mirror *each other*, neither is the origin of the democratic impulse that creates the elevation of agrarian society and, as a consequence, an anti-urban outlook of the overarching revolutionary discourse.

Another aspect of "Tintern Abbey" that I will argue is decidedly opposed to urban life is the poem's attention to community. Several critics have focused on the importance community plays in the poem's politics. I have already implied that there is a definite community formed between humanity and the deified nature of the poem. Miall takes this a step further than we have thus far though, arguing that the Wye valley itself is a "trope for what is natural in the human mind. The valley, being both calm and violent, typifies "the possibilities inherent in both the natural and human world that are rarely see unified in one place […]" (Miall 12). This is particularly true if we consider the change in Wordsworth's view of nature between 1793 and 1798, as he shifts away from picturesque theories of nature (Miall 3). Wordsworth himself explains this, writing that in 1793 "nature" was "all in all to him," it was not a community formed between the two (lines 73 and 76). Such an argument for community between nature and humans plainly opposes urban life, since Wordsworth implies that without nature the Wordsworthian imagination does not operate.

Community between people also plays an important role in the poem and adds to the anti-city sentiment. Heidi Thomson argues that Dorothy's presence makes "'Tintern Abbey' a poem about the necessity of a shared experience with a beloved person," because it shows the indispensable need for a familiar community" (535). This advances the status of "shared experience

over that of the "individual isolated one" (Thomson 535). This is shown through Wordsworth's repetitive opening of the address to Dorothy, "my dearest Friend,/ My dear, dear Friend" (lines 116-117). I have already shown that communities such as this one are impossible in the confines of a city, according to the sonnet discussed earlier, so the fact that this community between the two is formed in a natural setting is significant. The natural setting makes the community possible, whereas it would not occur in a city. Here "Tintern Abbey" promotes an agrarian society, as Notes does, through the emphasis placed on community within a natural setting. These communities created between nature and people and between individuals illustrate yet another piece of the discursive formation, in this case, illustrating again the anti-urban sentiment in both. This of course adds to the democratic impulse of the poem locating it within the revolutionary discourse.

The presence of walking in "Tintern Abbey" also illustrates the democratic impulse of the revolutionary discourse found in the poem. Roe focuses this aspect of his argument around the full title of the poem, "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey: On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798." He notes that many have discussed the importance of the date, which conspicuously falls only one day before the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, but "little has been said about the poem's occasion, 'On Revisiting the Banks of the

Wye during a Tour" (Roe 172). While one reason many were touring the Wye was because it was exceptionally dangerous to travel on the continent in 1798, "Revisiting" also implies the speaker's remembrance of an earlier, more revolutionary time, before his view of the French Revolution sours (Roe 172). In this sense, "revisiting" is a revolutionary act in itself, that is, by viewing revolution as we would that of a revolving wheel, always revolving and returning to the same physical spaces. Therefore, walking through the Wye not only refers to the "democratic mobility" previously discussed, but also to overt revolution. Therefore, the walking in "Tintern Abbey," suggests something more than we have seen from this element of the discourse thus far: a desire for a successful democratic revolution. In short, this desire is seen through the poem's dating, recalling a revolution that did not turn out well, combined with the idea of revolutionary politics latent in the circular movement of walking. By implication then, the poem wants to revisit (or revolve back to) the politically positive side of the French Revolution (right before and during the fall of the Bastille) and try again, this time avoiding the subsequent pitfalls that tainted it.[8]

Another useful reading of walking comes from Robin Jarvis. She writes that "walking," for Romantic pedestrian travelers,

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[8] This argument relies heavily on Langan's theories of walking discussed briefly in Chapter One. See Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the simulation of freedom. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. pp. 1-30

"affirmed a desired freedom from context, however partial, temporary or illusory that freedom might be," including freedom from the "context of a hierarchical and segregated society" (Jarvis 28). Jarvis does not offer a specific reading of "Tintern Abbey," but a reading through her theoretical lens is certainly possible and useful here. For this, I will examine one of the poem's most famous sections, where Wordsworth writes:

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. (lines 89-93)

With this complicated sentence, the speaker essentially states that he/she has learned to view nature reverently rather than thoughtlessly. Nature is, because of the constant presence of the "still, sad music of humanity," the refuge that chastens and subdues. Additionally, nature is still deified through its sublimity, and the poet still "shrink[s] into the minuteness of [his/her] own nature" (or is chastened and subdued), as Burke would have it, but it does not cause the physical pain we see in Jefferson's work (Burke Philosophical 134). The speaker does see humanity in this passage, but the humanity he sees is cheerless, as indicated, obviously, by the term "sad," but also "still." Music is rendered silent with such an adjective; sound requires

movement to exist at all. Therefore, turning to Jarvis's interpretive strategy, the "still, sad music of humanity" is the hierarchal society. This hierarchy is "still," that is, quiet, because the hierarchy silences those at the bottom of the power structure. The poem continues, saying that nature is a refuge from the music, that it "disturbs [him] with the joy/Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused" (lines 95-97). And to access nature, which he calls the "anchor of [his] purest thoughts, the nurse,/The guide, the guardian of [his] heart, and soul/Of all [his] moral being", he walks into "the meadows and the woods,/And mountains" which the "eye and ear […] half create[s]" and "perceive[s]" (lines 110-112, 104-108). Therefore, escaping the silencing hierarchy through walking tours in nature is an undeniably democratic act because it allows people a better opportunity to "half-create" the world in which they live and attacks the urban world that causes "weariness" referred in the second verse paragraph, which I will discuss in more detail later. In Jarvis's terms, walking has allowed Wordsworth freedom from the "context of a hierarchical and segregated society" I mentioned above. Since walking causes a similar reaction in Jefferson's work, that is, it breaks down class hierarchy since he will allow the "public" to cross the natural bridge, another piece of the discursive formation created between these two works falls into place.

This element of the revolutionary discourse in "Tintern Abbey" leads me directly to the next, the heavy emphasis on elevating common humanity. It also serves to reiterate my point that these three points are intertwined and cannot be broken apart. The poem, especially in this section, ties together walking, nature (and therefore anti-city sentiment), and the elevation of common humanity to illustrate the overarching discourse. I will address this final point here, albeit more briefly than the previous two to avoid redundancy.

William Richey argues that this point is the goal of the entire poem. Wordsworth, according to Richey, "seeks a renewed 'zeal' and 'service' to his fellow man that is fostered by his love of the natural world and the natural feelings of the human heart" (218). Arguing against Levinson, Richey claims that the displacement of the Abbey itself is not an oversight. Instead, by leaving it out, Wordsworth "purges the image of its associations with isolation," and instead sees "it as an embodiment of communalism and brotherhood" (Richey 218). As I stated earlier, community is an important aspect of the democratic impulse of the poem as it is a direct elevation of common people, in Richey's terms, a call to strive for "social and political reform" (219). We should note that in other poems, such as "The Thorn," as I have already discussed, the community is not a positive, democratic group. Here Wordsworth offers us a positively construed example of how the right kind of community

can elevate common humanity. Such a community must be willing to do what the speaker of the poem does--revisit the Wye with Dorothy, or, less literally, be willing to be renewed through nature and a relationship others. Such attitudes are seen in Notes also, as I have already indicated. Jefferson's desire for an agrarian community, while overtly opposing urban life, subtly elevates the status of the common people.

Finally, Harrison maintains that Wordsworth's early poetry "not only challenges its middle-class readers to recognize the basic humanity of the poor, but challenges its working-class readers to realize their right to an equal share of human dignity and political power" (23). Harrison offers no direct reading of "Tintern Abbey," but the principles underlying his claim are certainly evident in the poem. This is clearly seen in the second verse paragraph, where Wordsworth discusses his many recollections of the Wye valley. He writes that the memory has created in him

> feelings
> Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
> As may have had no trivial influence
> On that best portion of a good man's life;
> His little unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love. (lines 31-36)

With this statement, Wordsworth wittingly elevates above nature one's "acts/Of kindness and of joy." It is an extremely broad

humanist statement; it can refer to any number of acts, but considering the context, it is evidence of Harrison's thesis. Such humanist actions are certainly evidence of the democratic impulse of "Tintern Abbey," because actively seeking to create equality among all people is a vanguard of democracy. "Tintern Abbey" does this through the very mentioning of hermits and vagrants just a few lines before these. One can certainly imagine, considering the rest of Lyrical Ballads, that Wordsworth is not ignoring, repressing, or displacing them. Instead he is, with these few lines, stating that helping lower classes is the "best portion of a good man's life."

Chapter 4

Epilogue: Wordsworth's Poetry as the Revolutionary Discourse

In the preceding chapters I have sought to define the political structure of some of the Lyrical Ballads. In doing so, I have, in some sense, merely stated the obvious: Wordsworth was a poet and a republican during the 1790s whose poetry emits republican ideals. This statement is too simplified, but not significantly; it is missing only the often heard comments on the failure of the French Revolution and Wordsworth's subsequent disillusionment with it. What I hope for with this work, then, is to put together a more positive definition of the poem's politics--a politics that can be defined through and by its relationship with the American Revolution.

To conclude, then, I will offer one final reading of a poem that will simply and concisely sum up the positioning of Lyrical Ballads within the discourse of the American Revolution. Perhaps this reading of "Old Man Travelling: Animal Tranquillity [sic] and Decay, a Sketch" would fit equally well into my second chapter--the poem is not at first glance particularly political. But, as I have shown again and again, there is a latent political structure underlying these poems. Here, as we have seen throughout, the three elements of the revolutionary discourse are present, and point us back towards and into the discourse established around the American Revolution.

First, and most obviously, is the poem's emphasis on walking. Here, even more than we have seen in other instances, walking comes across as a particularly freeing gesture, since the man "travels on, and in his face, his step,/ His gait, is one expression" which is "insensibly subdued/To settled quiet" (lines 4-5, 7-8). In other words, through the very act of walking, the old man emits a tranquil posture; in other words, he does not have the look of an old man oppressed by his situation. In fact, the poem goes out of its way to state that he is not oppressed, since he is a man who "does not move with pain,/but moves with thought" (lines 6-7). This suggests that the man does not have to strain himself physically to walk--he simply thinks about it and it happens. In short, his body is freed from all forms of constraint, even physical exertion, through his thoughts. And his thoughts, in turn, push him through the act of walking with its underlying democratic aims.

But is it is not the act of walking in itself that is the most active force on his being free. Instead, "[h]e is by *nature* led/To peace so perfect, that the young behold/With envy, what the old man hardly feels" (lines 12-14, emphasis mine). In fact, the same sentiment is expressed in the poem's opening lines, where the traveler goes unnoticed by birds:

> The little hedge-row birds,
> That peck along the road, regard him not (lines 1-2).

The old man becomes a piece of nature, completely unnoticed by it, and "led" to his "peace." This position is in direct contrast with the concluding lines of the poem, where he states that his son is dying in Falmouth. The son has been injured in a "sea-fight" and brought to the city to die. It is important for us to note that he did not simply die on the ocean, but instead he is taken to a city, which demonstrates clearly the anti-urban sentiment of the revolutionary discourse. His father, on the other hand, operates as the positive manifestation thereof, since his peaceful nature springs from the natural surroundings of which he is a part.

Finally, and most importantly, the poem elevates common humanity with the sketch of this old man. In fact, he is lifted up to god-like status, seamlessly flowing through the natural world. He is described as

> one by whom
> All effort seems forgotten, one to whom
> Long patience has such mild composure given,
> That patience now doth seem a thing, of which
> He hath no need (lines 8-12).

All of these things, and the subsequent "peace" from them, are "what the old man hardly feels," making him the envy of others. The old man almost floats along the road, with birds regarding him not since he is part of them, one who moves without pain but with patience to his own son's deathbed. It is this picture of

common humanity that Lyrical Ballads strives for throughout, the picture of the almost untouchable common being, one who has sovereign rights as an individual, who is not subject to the oppressive forces about him or her. This man and this poem represents exactly the elements of the revolutionary discourse, allowing us a clear picture of the ways in which Lyrical Ballads's politics are best defined through the lens of the discourse created by the American Revolution.

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